


Ideas to jump-start your next community service project

The U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa hosts an  annual Community Service Day for alumni of their language program to gather together and improve their city. (U.S. Embassy Kinshasa/Flickr)

July 18 was the YALI Network Day of Service on Mandela Day. But, are you thinking about ways to honor his legacy all year round by hosting a [#YALIServes event](#)?

Try volunteering for a day in a clinic, school or orphanage in your village, town, city or neighborhood on July 18. Ask your friends and family to join you! Maybe you will find your calling for your next big volunteer commitment.

If you are organizing a new venture, remember that the most successful community projects include input from the community. Give the people who will benefit from your project a voice in identifying and implementing community needs.

- ASK community members to help you identify the most important needs in their village, town or neighborhood. Organize a community meeting or workshop to gather ideas. Make sure people feel invested in the project.
- INVOLVE community members in carrying out your project to help ensure and sustain its success.

Below is a list of some suggested activities to help meet basic community needs throughout rural and urban Africa. These are meant to help inspire your next community project or find an existing program to join that fits your particular skills.

Art projects

- Paint a mural that embodies the values of your community.
- Paint a bus stop.
- Volunteer at an art project event at a local school, library, community center or orphanage.
- Teach a craft at a women's shelter.

Community health

- Volunteer at a medical clinic for a day.
- Teach a short hand-washing activity at a local school.
- Hand out fliers for an HIV/AIDS or vaccination program to increase awareness.
- Organize an "[Urgent Run](#)" event for U.N. Toilet Day on November 19, 2017.

Education

- Volunteer at a local school for a day.
- Read a book to children in a local library.
- Teach accounting, bookkeeping or other business skills at a local women's shelter, high school or

community center.

- Check out the [After School Assistance Project](#) for ideas.
- Organize a book drive and donate to a local library, school or community center.

Farming

- Plant or work in a community garden.
- Help advertise a business start-up idea like [iCow](#).
- Help build a community rainwater catchment.

Neighborhood improvement

- Gather a crew and make repairs to a neighbor's home.
- Organize a neighborhood trash pick-up day with your friends and colleagues.
- Collect supplies for a family that has suffered a recent crisis.
- Campaign for additional streetlights or better ambulance service in underserved areas.

Sports

- Help coach kids at an after-school sport program.
- Get ideas and inspiration from programs like [GCU soccer](#).

Raise funds for your next big community project

- Check out online fundraising platforms like [causevox](#) or see this [wiki on how to fundraise](#).

Here are a few volunteer projects our [YALI Facebook followers](#) are already carrying out this summer:

- From **Nigeria**: Volunteers are “reaching out to homes of children and adults living with disabilities and to those who are physically challenged in my community.”
- From **Burundi**: Volunteers are “getting students involved in the #summer event named 0 pregnancy for teenagers.”
- From **Malawi**: “Mkaika Youth Organisation is planning to have a clean up exercise around Mkaika Trading Centre in Nkhotakota, Malawi. We believe in proper waste management to avoid prevalence of some diseases. Sweeping, collecting waste and disposing of it properly.”
- From **Uganda**: Volunteers work with “the Nawanyingi Orphaned Families Empowerment Project (NawOFEP), whose goal is to strengthen the capacity of the orphan caregivers and to provide 124 orphans with nutritionally adequate food and other needs on a sustainable basis.”

If you have a really BIG idea on how to address global health or food security challenges, consider [pitching it to USAID](#).
